



House K12 Committee

Testimony on HB 2048

Mr. Terrell Davis

Head of School

1/23/2023

Madam Chair,

Thank you for the time to share, I am not here to bash the public school system, but instead I want to talk about the impact of tax credit program for students at The Independent School in Wichita Kansas. "Uniquely You, Uniquely Independent" is not just our school's motto but this embodies the spirit of our campus. The Independent School or TIS serves 535 students from 6 weeks to the 12th grade, in four divisions, our Early Learning Center, Lower School, Middle School and Upper School. Our vision is to be the premier private college preparatory school in Kansas, where we strive for excellence in Academics, Activities and Athletics. And where we expect you to be uniquely you, uniquely Independent. We have excellent and committed teachers and an outstanding board that loves kids and values diversity.

I want to share with you the impact that TIS has had on students who attend our school that receive the ACE scholarship. The average Upper School student has improved their GPA by .33, with the largest increase of a student improving their GPA from an incoming 1.8 to a 3.2, the average Middle School student has improved their GPA by .80, with the largest increase of a student improving their GPA from an incoming 1.3 to 3.6. As you can see from that data students are rising to the level of expectation and excelling at our school. We did not hide behind our admissions policy, we did not exclude students based on race, nor their gender identity or expression. We simply provided an environment with

high academic expectations, lower class sizes, a positive school culture, and HOPE! Students put it best when asked what has changed for you here? "Mr. Davis, I can just go to school and learn. It's hard here, but I can be myself, and the teachers push us to be the best we can be without any excuses."

Last week, I witnessed one of our students who walk to our Lower School, pick up his sister bring her back to our middle school, make sure she had an afterschool snack, made sure she did her homework, took her out to the basketball court during half time to shoot baskets with him and his teammates, ask one of his teachers if she could sit next to her while he got dressed for his game, and then came out checked her homework, and sat next to her until his mom was able to make it to the game. Two days later, during the varsity game, the same young man saw his former Middle School Principal at the game, he ran up to her and gave her the biggest hug and said with the biggest smile on his face "I made Honor Roll!", he could have bragged about so many other accomplishments such as dunking in a game, or leading his team in scoring or having an undefeated season, but his biggest accomplishment was making the Honor Roll. This is the spirit of TIS, Excellence!

This should be the time that we focus on providing the best education for all students, this is not about political sides, it's not about differing ideologies, it's not about private versus public, this is about kids, and what is in the best interest of kids, ALL KIDS! My parents' zip code should not determine if I can attend a college preparatory school, their bank account should not determine if I can experience the best education possible that fits me. Let's remove barriers and find a way for all kids to find that place where they can soar academically. Do I wish I had a donor that donated millions of dollars to my campus to make our school affordable for everyone YES, but until that happens let's work together to ensure that the success that we are having at The Independent School for our students is experienced at every school across this state, Public and Private. This is about kids! They deserve the best we can offer!

Thank you,
Terrell Davis